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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2008

In Today's Papers

Debate over U.S. Aid Shipments to Georgia via Black Sea Sparks
Controversy

All media outlets report about the negotiations between the U.S. and Turkey regarding the transport of aid to Georgia via the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Islamist-oriented Zaman carries the front-page headline, "The U.S. Wants Passage through the Bosphorus, Ankara Wants to Find a Formula for an Agreement," as, "Russia is against the deployment of U.S. ships in the Black Sea." Mainstream Aksam reports, "Ankara is afraid that one violation of the Montreux Treaty could open up debates concerning the entire convention," and calls the negotiations with the U.S. "a fresh crisis." Mainstream Vatan notes, "Turkey is caught between the U.S. and Russia. If Turkey does not allow the U.S. ships through the straits, a new crisis with the U.S. will emerge. If Turkey does allow the U.S. ships through the straits, Russia will see this as a violation of the Montreux Treaty and a new crisis with Russia will emerge." Mainstream Hurriyet notes, "Turkey warned NATO that a violation of the Montreux Treaty could provide Russia with a powerful trump card in the region." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the comments of Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation, who compared Turkey's refusal to allow U.S. warships into the Black Sea to the March 1, 2003 crisis in which Turkey declined permission to the U.S. to open a northern front in the Iraq war via Turkey.

The U.S. Will Abide By the Montreux Treaty

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Matt Bryza spoke at the Foreign Press Center yesterday. Today's coverage of his comments is straightforward and appears to calm the frenzy surrounding the Montreux controversy. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the banner headline, "The U.S. Will Abide By the Montreux Treaty," and notes, "while the Pentagon insists on sending naval hospital ships to the Black Sea, the State Department announced there is no crisis with Turkey and the U.S. will abide by the provisions of the Montreux Treaty." Islamist-oriented Zaman writes, "Bryza said the U.S. has not made a formal request for the passage of U.S. Navy hospital ships." NTV reports Bryza said, "The U.S. can send cargo ships that abide by the guidelines set by the

Montreux Treaty." Mainstream Milliyet, however, focuses on Bryza's take on Turkish efforts to create a Caucasus Stability Pact, "I was surprised by this effort," because, "I was not informed of these efforts despite the close partnership that exists between Turkey and the U.S."

Editorial Commentary on Aid to Georgia through the Straits

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet (8/20): "Despite the Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman's statements regarding negotiations with Turkey about the passage of U.S. naval vessels through the Turkish straits, the Turkish Foreign Ministry stressed the U.S. has made no official request yet. The U.S. Embassy in Ankara also confirmed that there is no official request for vessel passage. According to the Montreux Treaty, there are strict regulations for warships passing through the straits. A well-known law professor, Huseyin Pazarci, told me 'Turkey should be careful in applying the rules of the Montreux Treaty. Otherwise, stability in the Black Sea could be damaged and Turkey will suffer the most.' Circles within the Foreign Ministry agree. Moreover, the Foreign Ministry reiterated that they will assist the U.S. in every possible regarding humanitarian aid to Georgia via air passage and there are no limitations there."

Papers Continue to Criticize Turkey for Receiving Sudan's Al-Bashir
All papers report President Abdullah Gul met with Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir on Tuesday at the Turkey-Africa Summit in Istanbul. Gul told Al-Bashir that Turkey was willing to make new investments and be involved in oil exploration in Sudan; he also reportedly urged Al-Bashir to work to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis

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in Darfur.

Meanwhile, papers report opposition CHP lawmaker Ahmet Ersin submitted a motion in Parliament calling on Prime Minister Erdogan to explain the frequent invitations extended to Al-Bashir. Ersin noted the potential damage such invitations can have on Turkey's image, especially after criticism from leading international human rights organizations.

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the headline, "Official Reception to the Perpetrator of Genocide," and criticizes President Gul for meeting with the figure accused of atrocities in Darfur. Liberal Radikal strikes a similar tone, criticizing the fact that Al-Bashir was given high level receptions in Turkey. "Gul Shakes That Man's Hand Again," says leftist Taraf, slamming President Gul for meeting with Al-Bashir and not touching on the Sudanese president's responsibility in Darfur killings.

A joint declaration released at the end of the summit announced Turkey's 'strategic partnership' with the African Union and Turkey's new initiatives in Africa. Papers comment the real aim of the summit was to garner support from African countries for Turkey's bid for a seat at the UN Security Council during 2009-2010. Turkey will compete against Iceland and Austria when the voting is held in October. Turkey must secure the support of 128 UN members. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was reported as saying he believed "almost all African countries would support Turkey's candidacy for a nonpermanent seat at the UN Security Council."

Editorial Commentary on Sudan President's Turkey Visit

Tufan Turenc criticized Al-Bashir's visit to Turkey in mainstream Hurriyet : "The democratic world hates Al-Bashir for his criminal role in the Darfur genocide. While he is not allowed into 108 countries, Turkey opens its doors and rolls out the red carpet each time he comes to Turkey. Al-Bashir flaunts the support Turkey and the Turkish government openly bestow upon him. What happened to AKP policies and efforts that sought to rid this country of criminals?"

Hikmet Cetinkaya in Cumhuriyet: "Sudan's Al-Bashir has visited Turkey for a second time; his first call was in January. Those who had breakfast with the Butcher of Darfur could have asked him why hundreds of thousands of people were killed in Darfur; but they

don't have the guts to do that. The Sudanese president, known for his responsibility in the genocide in Darfur, held a private meeting with Abdullah Gul in Istanbul. What can we say? This is such a disgrace for Turkey."

Paper: Rice and Babacan Give Each Other the Cold Shoulder

In several papers, photos of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan dominate the international pages. Mainstream Vatan carries the caption, "Rice and Babacan give each other the cold shoulder," at the North Atlantic Council Meeting in Brussels yesterday. Meanwhile, mainstream Milliyet's caption to this photo reads, "Babacan and Rice are side by side in Brussels."

This photo of Rice and Babacan at the NAC is carried in all papers today.

President Gul Pardons Erbakan

Vatan, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Posta, Bugun, Turkiye, Cumhuriyet, Radikal: President Gul pardoned former leader of the banned Welfare Party (RP) Necmettin Erbakan, who was under house arrest after being found guilty on corruption charges, publicly known as the "lost trillion" case. Erbakan was accused of fraud of falsifying party records. Mainstream Vatan's headline reads "Is this right, Mr. President?" Vatan reports that President Gul was among those implicated in this 'lost trillion' case. Mainstream

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Sabah and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet report that the main opposition party CHP deputy Atilla Kart said "President Gul exercised the power given to him by the Constitution, however the decision should be questioned ethically because Gul himself is a suspect in the same case and cannot not be tried because of his political immunity."

Suicide Bomber Detonates his Car in Mersin, Injures 13 Policemen Sabah, Milliyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak, and others: Mainstream Milliyet reports that Mersin police followed a tip about a car loaded with explosives and tried to stop the car at a check-point. While the suicide bomber managed to escape the first check-point, he detonated the bomb strapped to him at the second check-point when he realized that he would be captured. 13 police officers were injured in the blast. The explosive is believed to be 30kg of C-4 and it was revealed that the target of the bomber was the police department in Mersin.

Editorial Commentary on Pakistan, Political Islam vs. U.S.

Hikmet Bila in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "Pakistan, struggling in an environment of blood and death, might be assigned a new task concerning Iran. Could Pakistan accomplish this new assignment without Musharraf? Or are we going to see new Musharrafs or Ziya ul-Haks in Pakistan? Pakistan, which has recently been debating secularism and moderate Islam, is now discussing whether it should choose secular Islam or radical Islam. It's for the Pakistanis who celebrate Musharraf's departure to pick among these options."

Mehmet Barlas observed in mainstream Sabah (8/20): "Some describe the situation in Georgia as 'the beginning of a new Cold War.' In this new war the hostile parties are not the communists or the capitalists. The ideological angle against the U.S. in this new cold war is political Islam. This political Islam could be carried out by Khomeini, Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hizbullah or the Taliban. Now that Musharraf has resigned, Pakistanis are concerned that political Islam could fill the power vacuum. In this new Cold War era, countries' internal stability is very important. Turkey is aware that the path to security is the path to the EU. Therefore, every attempt by the government to carry out EU reforms should be supported fully."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

- Opposition CHP will not back the AKP-proposed constitutional

reforms, while MHP will support the reforms mentioned in Turkey's National Program for EU harmonization.

- The Council of State (Danistay) suspended the privatization of nine motorways and two Bosphorus bridges.
- Bulgaria opens a consulate in the city of Bursa.

International News

- U.S. presidential nominee Senator John McCain warns if Russia captured the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, it could exert increased influence in the energy market.
- Turkish Cypriot presidential spokesman Hasan Ercakica blamed Greek Cypriot leader Christofias for trying to seize the cities of Guzelyurt, Karpaz and Maras before the start of the talks on the divided island.
- Ahmad Fayyazbaksh, the head of an Iranian state-owned nuclear energy production company, says Iran is preparing to build more nuclear power plants.

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